



**STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION  
DIVISION OF MENTAL RETARDATION SERVICES  
ANDREW JACKSON BUILDING, 15<sup>th</sup> FLOOR  
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***NEW LAW ASSISTS TENNESSEANS WITH DISABILITIES  
Employment Opportunities Enhanced***

**Nashville** – Governor Phil Bredesen has signed into law a bill which provides incentives for Tennessee employers to hire, work with, train and mentor persons with disabilities who receive state services. The incentives are in the form of franchise and excise tax credits - \$5,000 for each new full-time employee and \$2,000 for each new part-time employee.

The credits apply to employers who hire persons served by the Division of Mental Retardation Services, Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, Department of Health, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Finance and Administration and the Tennessee Committee for the Employment of Persons with Disabilities.

According to a 1998 National Organization on Disability (NOD)/Harris Poll of Americans with disabilities, large gaps exist between adults with disabilities and other adults regarding basic aspects of life. Employment was exposed as the widest chasm.

"This is a strong measure which will improve the lives of countless Tennesseans with disabilities," said Division of Mental Retardation Services Deputy Commissioner Stephen H. Norris. "Most persons with disabilities are able to work and are successful in all areas of our economy. Access to jobs affords them the opportunity to realize their dreams and be productive members of their communities."

State Representative Harry Brooks initiated discussion on employment incentives three years ago. While the law coming to fruition was a strong bi-partisan effort, it was Brooks and State Senator Jim Bryson who spearheaded the effort.

"I'm pleased to support legislation that will create an environment that improves the lives of our disabled citizens," said Brooks. "I believe our state can be a leader in fostering employment for persons with disabilities. This is a great step in that direction."

"This program creates a win-win situation," said Bryson. "It elevates self-worth and self-sufficiency; helping persons achieve life goals. It is also economically advantageous as there is relief from services, saving taxpayers money."

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